

## **Qantas, Engineers at Odds Over Visual Safety Checks**



SYDNEY--Qantas Airways Ltd. (QAN.AU) said Thursday it has applied to Australia's workplace umpire to stop engineers performing pre-flight visual safety checks, as tensions continue to simmer between the country's flag carrier and trade unions.

Qantas on Wednesday commenced a new maintenance system for Boeing 737-800 and Airbus A330 aircraft that the airline said brings it into line with aircraft-manufacturer guidelines and other airlines.

In a separate statement, the Australian Licensed Aircraft Engineers Association said the visual safety checks were "crucial for identifying safety issues on an aircraft before they become a danger for passengers".

Qantas intends to rely on a "pilot walk around" to identify any aircraft defects instead, the union claimed.

The union has instructed its members to continue carrying out the checks, which Qantas said amounts to unprotected industrial action. It has applied to Fair Work Australia to force engineers to drop the checks.

"Modern aircraft have sophisticated systems which alert us to mechanical issues, meaning engineers don't need to check the aircraft before every single domestic flight," Lyell Strambi, the chief executive of Qantas Domestic said in a statement.

The company rejected the union's claim that its new practices breach policies on the management of change formulated by Australia's Civil Aviation Safety Authority. The regulator has already approved the system, Qantas said.

Qantas last year grounded its entire global fleet for two days to combat strike action from trade unions, forcing Fair Work Australia to intervene

and mandate a forced outcome to an industrial dispute over pay and conditions.

<http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20120614-700158.html>